

Council will take another look at Heritage Park

By Brock Weir

Supporters of the proposed Hillary-McIntyre Heritage Park could be taking another crack at getting \$50,000 to carry out a feasibility study next week, their next step in making the ambitious project a reality.

Proponents of the plan call for Hillary House and Horton Place – the yellow-brick house at the corner of Yonge Street and Irwin Avenue – to be combined with Readman House, the two-storey house sandwiched between the two, for a four acre heritage park which, they argue, would be an ‘anchor’ for the northern half of Aurora.

The project's steering committee presented a detailed plan to Aurora's Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) last month and their recommendation to Council was they consider putting \$50,000 forward for the feasibility study. This request, however, fell on deaf ears amid a heated debate over the recommendation and confusion over the intention of HAC's original motion.

Councillors Sandra Humfryes and John Abel, the two Councillors sitting on HAC, however, will soon be taking another leap at getting their motion on the table. Councillor Abel is expected to bring forward a motion this week at Council, directing staff ‘to provide a report summarizing the key elements of a feasibility study, and budget and timing’ for Council's consideration.

Their course of action was charted out the last HAC meeting over a discussion of just what went wrong with their first attempt to get Council to consider funding the study. The vision could gain further clarity, they said, by having Mr. Albino make the same presentation to Council as he had to HAC. The last time he presented the proposal at Council it was quite bare-bones compared to the latest incarnation and having that before Council could give members added insight to the project's vision.

‘I did recommend [to Mr. Albino] that perhaps future steps could be going back to Council with his revised presentation, revised architectural drawings and that sort of thing because a lot of work was put into it,’ said Vanessa Hicks, Manager of Heritage Planning for the Town of Aurora. ‘I wasn't sure at that point what I could recommend to him, but I did let him know what Council's direction was and that was my recommendation.’

Council's recommendation was to ultimately do nothing and simply receive the report containing the Committee's recommendation.

‘I see three options: that the committee could put forward direction in saying the Committee recommends staff put a report forward, but that hasn't been met well,’ said Councillor Abel. ‘The other is to have a delegation and have a motion arise from that, or the third is Council put a notice of motion and bring it forward that way.’

Members of HAC agreed, however, that it would be more effective if a motion came out of Mr. Albino's presentation and that would avoid the confusion that hit the Council table the last time around.

‘That was a learning experience for us,’ said Councillor Humfryes. ‘We tried this on several occasions on different angles to say we're not spending \$50,000.’

Added Councillor Abel: ‘Council got its dander up saying, ‘Who is the Committee to tell us to do a feasibility study?’ Sandra and I said that the committee wasn't telling them that but based on what the presentation was, they would recommend Council look at it and consider a feasibility study as vetted through us.’